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ABSTRACT

Counseling psychologists would be wise to distinguish themselves from other specialists by adopting an educational paradigm in which counseling psychologists function as teachers or trainers. In this role, they provide experiences designed to establish, increase or broaden desired skill, knowledge or motivation. The educational paradigm is broad enough to serve as the basic model for counseling psychology, and the college of education becomes its natural home. This paradigm also serves as a reasonably autonomous entity within the university and may administer both doctoral degrees and sub-doctoral programs to certify increasingly sophisticated skill levels. (Author/JAC)

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Counseling Psychology: In Search of A Paradigm

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Running Head: In Search of A Paradigm

Abstract

Counseling psychologists would be wise to cease defining themselves using the Type of Problem, Severity of Difficulty or Therapy Paradigms. Instead counseling psychologists would be wise to define themselves using the Educational Paradigm. In this paradigm, counseling psychologists do not perform therapy, but function as teachers or trainers by establishing, increasing or broadening desired skills, knowledge, or motivation. The College of Education becomes the natural home for training professional counseling psychologists because it functions as a reasonably autonomous entity within the university. It may grant both the Ph.D. and Ed.D. and may offer sub-doctoral programs which certify increasingly sophisticated skill levels.

Counseling Psychology: In Search of a Paradigm

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Counseling psychologists seem to be having trouble agreeing on what constitutes the field of Counseling Psychology (Whiteley, 1977). If one examines the APA publication Careers in Psychology, it is difficult to determine how counseling psychologists differ from clinical psychologists, except they can expect to make less money. The purposes of this paper are (1) state how counseling psychologists might distinguish themselves from other practitioners, and (2) suggest some training implications stemming from the proposed model. Many of the ideas presented in this paper have been suggested elsewhere (Authier, et. al. 1975; Ivey, 1976; Stigall, 1977), and may be traced to The Cubberly Conference held at Stanford University in 1965 (Krumboltz, 1980). The thesis of this paper is--it would be wise to adopt these ideas as the distinguishing paradigm for the entire field of Counseling Psychology.

Traditional Paradigms and Their Problems

One traditional paradigm used to conceptualize Counseling Psychology might be called The Type of Problem Paradigm. It suggests counseling psychologists deal with a certain set of problems, e.g. career decision problems, but not with other problems, e.g. personality problems. When counseling psychologists follow this paradigm, career decision-making problems quickly become the only problems perceived to be within their professional jurisdiction. Many counseling psychologists reject the view

they are only equipped to deal with career decision-making problems. They do not want to limit their practice or research to career education or vocational behavior (Whiteley, 1977). Thus, a paradigm equating counseling psychologists with career education or vocational behavior specialists is unlikely to be a satisfactory paradigm.

A second traditional paradigm might be called the Severity of Difficulty Paradigm. This paradigm suggests counseling psychologists deal with people experiencing "moderate" difficulties, or "developmental" difficulties, or problems which might be characterized as "not too severe." When counseling psychologists follow this paradigm, they are inevitably perceived as less well prepared clinical psychologists dealing with a more restricted range of problems. They may be accused of "sneaking in the back door," and illegitimately seeking certification for third party payments. An examination of advertised positions in the A.P.A. Monitor will show clinical psychologists are usually considered satisfactory substitutes for counseling psychologists but rarely are counseling psychologists considered satisfactory substitutes for clinical psychologists.

The Severity of Difficulty Paradigm produces second-class citizenship for the Counseling Psychologist because it rests on a more basic, underlying paradigm, The Therapy Paradigm. Therapeutics was originally one of several healing arts practiced by physicians. The word "therapy" historically means the use of physical substances as medicines to cure illnesses or at least remediate pathological physical conditions. The semantic relationship between therapy and illness makes it virtually impossible to retain one concept without the other because illness is

precisely the thing to which therapy is applied. Doing therapy implies the existence of illness. While many psychologically oriented practitioners have attempted to rid themselves of the illness notion, they are trapped into retaining it by their insistence on doing therapy. Ironically, the prestige associated today with the practice of medicine is probably the reason "therapy" is the activity so many other practitioners want to do.

When counseling psychologists adopt the Severity of Difficulty Paradigm, we are essentially saying, "We'll limit our practice to mild psychological illnesses." Since other psychological practitioners are not limiting themselves in this way, the counseling psychologist is quickly perceived as a second-class practitioner.

There are at least three options available to counseling psychologists with regard to The Therapy Paradigm. As a first option, we might attempt to retain both the Therapy Paradigm and the Severity of Difficulty Paradigm, yet insist we are not second-class citizens. This is roughly the path attempted by clinical psychologists relative to psychiatrists, and their battle continues even today. However, clinical psychologists have been aided by (1) a stronger research tradition relative to psychiatry, (2) their participation in the original psychiatrist-clinical psychologist--social worker team approach and (3) a large infusion of training funds and job opportunities made possible by federal legislation. Since clinical and counseling psychology share the same research tradition, counseling psychologists will not have this research tradition advantage. Further, no new infusion of training funds and job opportunities appears to be in the

offering for a profession based on a combination of the Severity of Difficulty and Therapy Paradigms. These are practical reasons for rejecting the first option.

A second option is retaining the Therapy Paradigm and rejecting the Severity of Difficulty Paradigm. This would remove any pretense of differentiating Counseling and Clinical Psychology. My personal experience is many counseling psychologists desire to adopt this position. However, I believe it is unwise for two reasons. The first is practical and political. There are already many groups laying claim to the Therapy Paradigm and Counseling Psychology will simply be one more. It will be difficult to push our way into this company, especially when another group of psychologists has already laid claim to the paradigm. Secondly, there is much useful work to be done with people that does not require the Therapy Paradigm. Reams of paper have been used attempting to demonstrate that conceptualizing certain human behavior as the result of illness and thus requiring therapeutic intervention is mistaken. Counseling psychologists would be wise to note these facts and exercise their third option. Reject the Therapy Paradigm.

An Alternative: The Educational Paradigm

The Type of Problem Pardigm, the Severity of Difficulty Paradigm, and the Therapy Paradigm fail because they are too restrictive and not distinctive. An alternative paradigm might be called the Educational Paradigm. In this paradigm, Counseling Psychology is an educational rather than a therapeutic process. In this paradigm, counseling psycholo-

gists are teachers or trainers and establish, increase or broaden client skill, knowledge or motivation. Using the Educational Paradigm, the client need not be conceptualized as the "victim" of poor or inadequate learning or development. The client is simply conceptualized as someone who would find it useful to possess certain skill, knowledge, or motivation. Using the Educational Paradigm, the distinguishing feature of Counseling Psychology is the generalized teaching model. Thus, counseling psychologists need not feel restricted to providing only career decision-making skill, knowledge, or motivation. The Educational Paradigm is at once broad and distinctive enough to serve as the basic paradigm of counseling psychology.

I suggest five phases be included when the counseling process is based on the Educational Paradigm. There should be a phase for determining and specifying the nature and level of the skill, knowledge, or motivation desired. There should be a phase for formulating experiences which are intended to establish, raise or expand skill, knowledge, or motivation. With greater or lesser involvement by the counseling psychologist, the client then attempts to complete the formulated experiences. Next, the effectiveness of the experiences should be evaluated. Finally, the desirability of additional skill, knowledge, or motivation should be determined.

Adopting the Educational Paradigm for Counseling Psychology does not preclude working with persons receiving reatment from practitioners using the Therapy Paradigm. An example might be a person having the malady labeled "diabetes." A physician might prescribe an appropriate therapeutic intervention. However, it might also be desirable for the person to change their eating habits. Though not the appropriate professional to provide

therapy, a counseling psychologist would be an appropriate professional to establish experiences designed to affect skill, knowledge, and motivation resulting in a change of eating habits. Another example might be a person having the malady labeled "schizophrenia." Though not the appropriate professional to provide therapy, a counseling psychologist would be an appropriate professional to establish experiences designed to affect skill, knowledge, and motivation resulting in increased social skills, basic living skills or other types of skill. I believe these examples further indicate the Educational Paradigm is at once broad and distinctive enough to serve as the basic paradigm of Counseling Psychology.

Implications for Training

In recent days, there has been a considerable push toward professional degrees for applied psychologists. Roughly translated, this seems to mean applied psychologists need training which is appropriate to the type of work they will eventually perform. Establishing professional schools of psychology and awarding the Psy. D. are recent developments flowing from this idea. If the Educational Paradigm is taken seriously, the appropriate professional school and degrees for counseling psychologists may already exist.

The College of Education is an already established professional school and many Counseling Psychology programs are already located there. A College of Education may have complete degree-granting power. Even where degrees are conferred through a university graduate school, The College of Education frequently retains functional control by specifying

its own criteria for granting the degree. These criteria may vary from those used by other segments of the university. In many cases, doctoral programs in colleges of education culminate in either the Ph.D. or Ed.D. degree. The Ed.D. might serve as the professional degree for counseling psychologists.

There is historical precedent for several levels of sub-doctoral training in colleges of education. There is, of course, baccalaureate and 30-hour master's level training. However, precedent also exists for a certification of skill level between the 30-hour masters degree and the doctoral degree. Programs composed of approximately 60 hours may lead to certification as an Educational Specialist. Educational Specialist programs could provide sufficient coursework and practical experience to produce a person well grounded in particular areas of expertise. Additionally, such a system of education would allow certification of increasingly sophisticated training. Thus, Counseling Psychology would not be forced into a "doctorate or nothing" model of applied psychological training which, though popular today, has been criticized by the Vail Conference (Korman, 1973).

The appropriateness of various types of research training for practicing applied psychologists is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it should be noted the Educational Paradigm of Counseling Psychology presented here requires evaluation of experiences designed to affect skills, knowledge, and motivation. While informal methods of evaluation may be appropriate on many occasions, there will be other occasions which require more formal and, perhaps, experimental methods of evaluation.

Summary

Counseling psychologists are encouraged to abandon the Type of Problem, Severity of Difficulty, and Therapy Paradigms as methods of defining themselves. Counseling psychologists would be wise to distinguish themselves from other professionals by adopting the Educational Paradigm in which counseling psychologists function as teachers or trainers, providing experiences designed to establish, increase or broaden desired skill, knowledge, or motivation. The Educational Paradigm is at once broad and distinctive enough to serve as the basic paradigm for Counseling Psychology. When the Educational Paradigm is adopted, the College of Education becomes the natural home for counseling psychologists. The College of Education is a particularly desirable base of operations because, functioning as a reasonably autonomous entity within the university, it provides an alternative doctoral degree to the Ph.D. and may offer sub-doctoral programs which certify increasingly sophisticated skill levels.

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